



Wildlife Management Institute

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To: Rep. Gary Howell

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The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) is pleased to support House Bill 5631, which concerns management of the American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) population found in Michigan. We are willing to be part of the oversight group to assist in the planning effort.

Founded in 1911, the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) is a private, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization, dedicated to the conservation, enhancement and professional management of North America's wildlife and other natural resources. Since that time WMI has been involved in national, regional, and state wildlife conservation efforts, projects, programs, and policy development. WMI has conducted more than 70 program and project reviews for state and federal agencies. WMI is a science-based, independent, nonpartisan, and non-membership organization. As such, we provide objective evaluation, conclusions, and recommendations to our clients.

The American woodcock is a popular game bird throughout eastern North America and is managed on the basis of two populations: eastern and central. Both populations have experienced significant declines since surveys were first implemented in the mid-1960s. Loss and degradation of early succession forest habitat is believed to be the primary factor responsible for these declines. Changes in land use and societal attitudes towards even-aged forest-management practices (i.e. clearcutting) that create early succession habitat will likely contribute to continued declines in woodcock populations.

The American Woodcock Conservation Plan documents changes in woodcock densities and habitat that occurred from the early 1970s to present (https://timberdoodle.org/sites/default/files/woodcockPlan_0.pdf). Population density deficits were calculated and specific habitat acreage goals for erasing such deficits were developed in this national plan. A dropdown plan for the Upper Great Lakes region has also been created (<https://timberdoodle.org/greatLakes>).

Over the last decade, many conservationists and landowners, including WMI, have joined a science-based effort called the Young Forest Project (www.youngforest.org). Partners include state and federal agencies, wildlife organizations, land trusts, timber companies, towns and counties, colleges and universities, the U.S. military, Native American tribes, and foresters helping private citizens manage their farms, woodlands, and vacation properties. Most forested land in the East and the Upper Midwest is privately owned – over 80 percent in some states – so it's crucial for the future of our wildlife that private landowners create young forest on their properties. State and federal cost-sharing funds can help landowners make this important habitat.

WMI looks forward to Michigan's efforts to manage American woodcock and the many other species that use young forest habitats.

Sincerely,

Scot Williamson, VP